

## REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are pending in the above-referenced application. In the present Office Action, claims 1, 4, and 8-24 are rejected and claims 2, 3, (5?), 6, 7, 25, and 26 are objected to. The drawings submitted on July 30, 2003 are accepted.

More particularly, the Office Action has:

1. Rejected claims 1, 4, 9, 11, 12, 17-19, and 21 as under 102(b) as being anticipated by Mendenhall (US Patent No. 5,812,760).

2. Rejected claims 8, 10, 13, 14, 20, and 22 under 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mendenhall in view of Brown (US Patent No. 6,675,345).

3. Rejected claims 15 and 23 under 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mendenhall in view of Abe (JP 4-287243, English Abstract).

4. Rejected claims 16 and 24 under 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mendenhall in view of Brown.

5. Indicated that claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 25, and 26 are objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including any intervening limitations.

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Regarding Item 5, Applicants have amended claims 2, 5, and 25, in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion. Applicants have left claims 3, 6, 7, and 26 un-amended, as they now depend on allowable claims, either 2 or 25. Applicants believe that these un-amended claims are in allowable form.

Applicants have amended claims 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16 to depend from claim 2, which is now in allowable form. Therefore, at least because claims 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16 depend on an allowable claim, these claims are now allowable.

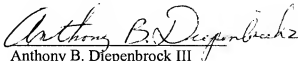
Additionally, Applicants have amended claims 18-24 to depend from claim 25, which is now in allowable form. Therefore, at least because claims 18-24 depend from claim 25, these claims are now allowable.

CONCLUSION

Having addressed each and every rejection and objection, Applicant believes that the application is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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